



Regional Themes

These statements represent the major messages/talking points for National Park Service educational efforts in Alaska. "Parks" in this context include national parks, monuments, preserves, historic sites, affiliated areas and associated programs which help us preserve and protect our heritage. These themes help to focus our efforts and provide answers to the questions we receive about what is unique and significant about the resources preserved in our Alaskan parks.

A. Alaska's national parks preserve large, intact natural systems including geological and hydrological processes and biological diversity, the foundations of life on earth.

Sub-themes:

1. Alaska's parks protect diverse ecosystems ranging from arctic tundra to coastal marine environments and contain a myriad of life forms, many of which are still being discovered.

2. Alaska's parks provide habitat to sustain fish and wildlife populations and serve as important areas where local and migratory populations are protected during critical periods of their life cycles.

3. Alaska's parks provide unfragmented habitat upon which living cultures depend.

4. Alaska's parks protect mosaics of plant communities and their pollinators, which sustain the life cycles of the plants.



The Alaska Range overlooking the Chulitna River on the South side of Denali NP.

5. Alaska's parks are "living laboratories" for educational study providing opportunities to research and monitor unique geologic, climatic, and biological processes.

6. Alaska's parks protect watersheds that produce clean air and water necessary to sustain plant, animal, and human communities.

B. Alaska's national parks provide access to a collective heritage where human activity remains integrated with natural processes.

Sub-themes:

1. The abundance of natural resources within Alaska's parks has attracted diverse cultures for millennia, from the earliest migrations of indigenous people and successive historical arrivals to the array of contemporary peoples who visit and make Alaska their home today.

2. Archeological and historical resources including landmark buildings and structures within Alaska's parks are evidence that successive cultures made their homes here, and provide context for present day subsistence, scientific, historic preservation,

educational and recreational activities.

3. The human history of Alaska's parks contains a collective experience, closely connected to the land and reflecting many clashes between cultures; the resulting stories allow the telling of Alaska's history through many vantage points, from more than 11,000 years ago to present.

4. Alaska's parks are places that nurture living cultures; places where visitors can experience, interact with, and learn from traditional cultures.



Early Signs of transportation in Alaska's Interior, Denali NP.



Katlan Pole, Sitka NHP.

"The new foundation of the National Park Service must be education, learning and appreciation – a renewed sense of the intrinsic value of our resources. If we are going to be successful, that success can only come if people develop a conservation ethic through which they understand the importance of preserving resources and protecting their heritage."

- Karen Wade (May 2003) Shared Thoughts on National Park Society



AAPLIC's Educational decals help visitors understand Bears.

C. Alaska's national parks and their compelling stories enrich our lives by providing opportunities that help us make connections with ideas and meanings larger than ourselves.

Sub-themes:

1. Alaska's parks are places of invaluable treasure; they help us connect with the meanings of the past, the beauty of nature, the benefits of solitude and natural sounds, and with many other characteristics of wild places that are becoming scarce in the modern world.

2. Alaska's parks contain grandeur on a humbling scale; they invigorate a sense of wonder that compels us to acknowledge our human limitations and to seek new and different ways to comprehend and appreciate the park's values.

3. Alaska's parks and their adjacent protected areas provide unparalleled opportunities for recreational experiences allowing for high adventure and other outdoor opportunities that inspire and enrich our lives.

4. Alaska's parks contain human meanings as immense and varied as the landscape itself; landscapes that may at once be wilderness



Writer Joe Yogerst in Icy Bay, Wrangell-St. Elias NP.

respites for solitude seekers, and the storied and vital ancestral homelands of Alaska Natives who continue to draw physical and spiritual sustenance from the land.

5. Alaska's parks reflect a colorful tapestry of human experience traced in a mosaic of historical, archeological and cultural sites

that weave together the characters and events of the past and bring them to life in the present.

6. Alaska's parks provide an unparalleled backdrop for personal and collective educational experiences, expanding our world of knowledge and feeling.



Air taxi access at Kobuk Valley NP.



Visitor Services in Klondike Gold Rush NHP.



Hikers beside Exit Glacier at Kenai Fjords NP.

D. Alaska's national parks are part of an interconnected regional, national, and global system of protected areas.

Sub-themes:

1. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), one of the most revolutionary pieces of conservation legislation ever enacted, sets forth unique, complex and often controversial provisions for parks, which have influenced global conservation practices.

2. Subsistence use in Alaska's parks acknowledges that people are a part of place, a concept shared with cultures around the world.

3. Alaska's parks contain a large portion of the nation's legislated Wilderness, making them a critical link in the global network of protected areas which provide for solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation.



Autumn reflections near Wrangell St. Elias NP.

4. Alaska's parks, together with partner and affiliated organizations, protect and preserve parts of an international network of historic sites, buildings and structures that connect current generations to the past.

5. Alaska's parks are connected to the global system of protected areas through numerous World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, and international partnerships and boundaries.

6. Alaska's parks, together with parks nationwide, are America's greatest "university without walls", offering life-long learners a bridge between knowledge and responsibility.

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